CHRISTMAS DECORATION. "HOW BOES IT LOOK?" Neath the frosty sky sounds, sweet and clear, The joyous music of Christmas bells, Onward borne by the breeze more near, Blest is the tale their melody tells! Nature is wrapped in her shroud of white, Cold without is the evening air; See from you windows there shines a light, Happiness, warmth, within are there. Lustrous holly and mistletoe glisten In gay festoous from the dark oak wall, Sweet young voices with laughter, -listen .-Wake the echoes of Elmsley Hall. Ivy and laurel fitfully gleam,

Closely with critical eye now scanned. How does it look? is it decked aright? Is you garland there as it ought to be? Then holly glows bright in the glad fire-light, The wreaths of laurel are fair to sea: The circlets of ivy gracefully twine Round the mirror, like cloud-wreaths round a

Daintily placed by a fair young hand,

Lit by the flame with its ruby beam,

Star. The mistletoe berries as silver shine-There is something else that is fairer far. 4. How does it look ?" "Tis a sweet young face; Eyes that are gentle, so soft, so pure; Full of each tender, maidenly grace, Lit with a look, though gay, demure! A face that shines forth like an April day, Where a sigh and a smile together vie: The smile is victor, and yet one may

Know that beneath there lurks the sigh. "How does it look ?" Long leagues away Some one sits in the evening gloom Musing alone; his fancies stray To one much-loved face, to a well-known room. "How does it look ?" that smooth young brow, Those soft blue eyes which the teardrops dim: Does she not think of the wanderer now? Are not her thoughts away with him?

THE CHRISTMAS TREE.

Bringing with him, frolic, mirth:

Christmas once again has come,

Taking back the wanderer home, Scattering joy throughout the earth. Merry faces, gay with laughter, Follow in his jocund train; "Christmas comes!" Let roof and rafter Echo back the cry again! Hail the monarch -thus 'tis right -With a crown of holly bright; Place upon his hoary brow Silver beads of mistletoe! Children, put the task-book by, Let us hold high revelry! "Hither come with mirth and glee," Christmas calls, "around my tree!" Quick they come-a joyous band, Childish faces, smiling bright: Round the Christmas tree they stand, Dazzled by its glittering light; Sisters, brothers, cousins, there-Something waits them every one, For to all is Christmas fair; He denies his gifts to none. Gaily shines the light around From the branches to the ground: On the dark-green foliage beams. With its merry laughing gleams, Lighting up, with joyous glow, Presents swinging to and fro: See my gifts!" says Christmas, "see How they dance upon my tree !" Hear their gentle shouts of joy, As they throng the tree beside Arthur, Edward, Lily, Floy, All have gone for Christmas tide-All to grandpapa's have gone. Auntle gives them each a prize, Something good for every one, Listen to their merry cries! Christmas, as through life they go. Will it thus be always so? Will there be for every one Prizes rich, and blanks for none. In life's lottery as in thine.

A PLEASANT CHRISTMAS STORY.

Upon which the tapers shine?

Christmas, tell me, will it be

Then, as now, upon thy tree?

SIR GUY'S COBLET.

BY MISS ANNIE THOMAS. THE CELEBRATED ENG-LISH NOVELIST, AUTHORESS OF "DENIS DOUNE," WALTER GORING." "PLAYED OUT." ETC. ETC.

It was the second or third day of December when the postman, after a long period of total abstinence from double knocking at our door, fell away into moderation, and left us a couple of letters.

We were living alone together, my brother's widow and I, and our interests, and consequently our correspondents, were not numerous, She was my senior by-no matter how many years, but quite enough to render the arrangement a perfectly proper one, even according to the most severe conventional code, although I was unmarried, and still called a girl by verbally well-disposed friends.

My brother had been dead about eighteen months. He had died worn out, broken down, used up-these are several phrases descriptive of the same thing. In plain English, he had "gone to his death" in the columns of a daily paper-gone to it as unflinchingly, as theroically, as cheerfully as any one of that gallant band who made the never-to-be-too-frequentlyquoted charge at Balaclava. But he belonged to a noble army of martyrs whose deeds do not get recorded by laureates; so when he fell down in fighting the hard fight of the daily press, the ranks closed, and nobody missed him-nobody, at least, save his wife and his sister. Very few people seem to be missed when they fall out of their places, however it may be in reality.

It is a fact, and therefore, in the tace of all precedent, I will state it, but there had never existed a grain of anything save the kindliest feeling between my sister-in-law and myself. She had never teared "my interference," I had never accused her even in my heart of attempting to alienate Guy's affections from me. The result of this abnegation of the time-honored rights of sisters-in-law was, that while Guy lived we all carried on the war merrily and happily; and when Guy died, we decided that it would be very hard for the two who were left to part. She was alone in the world, and I was virtually, though not nominally, alone too, There was an uncle of my mother's alive,

crest to me, merely a badge of respecta- ! bility-nothing more, to be mentioned in a modulated voice even to myself-a baronet-Sir Guy Pomfret. My mother had felt that she was taking almost a liberty in naming her only son after the mighty head of her house. But she had done it, and even dared to apprize him of it-which act of fealty Sir Guy rewarded by sending my brother a little morocco box containing a small embossed silver mug-'goblet" he called it in his letter; but'as it was not capable of containing half-a-pint of anything, we declined using the the more pretentious appellation in familiar converse, and it came to be known in the household as "Guy's mug."

Of course we were sitting at our breakfast table when these two letters arrived. Every body is sitting at breaklast when letters arrive. in fiction. We were discussing our probable chances of passing a remarkably dreary Christmas, when the girl who served us in our uncomfortable lodgings came in with our letters, which we seized with the eagerness people who have not received a written word for weeks only

Mine was the shorter, and so was read the sconer of the two; but, short as it was, it was very staggering. It was dated from "The Towers, ------shire," and was to the following effect:-

"My Dear Miss Dunbar (I was the dear Miss Dunbar):—My father and I was speaking yeserday of a regret we often feel, that we did not ee more of your dear mother while she was alive. This misfortunee is, however, not to be remedied now"- ("hardly," I thought)--"but we at least may know each other. We expect a few friends down at Christmas; you must come to us then, as we very much wish to make your acquaintance. Come down on the 23d, if you can conveniently, by the 11 A. M. train; you will be met at the Playford station. We were extremely sorry to hear of your brother's death. I send this under cover to his lawyer. who is most likely in posses-

"My father desires his kind regards, and joins with me in hoping that we shall soon see you.
"In the meantime, believe me to be your affectionate consin. RACHAEL POMPRET."

The reader will agree with me that this letter from my "affectionate cousin, Rachael Pomfret," an utter stranger even by name to me, must have been very staggering. It was some minutes before I could realize that it was not a bit of an
absorb dream. But by the time my sister had
read her letter I had accepted mine as a fact, and knew that I was broad awake.
"Helen," I began, as she put her letter back

into its envelope, "here's an invitation to the "And who are the Towers?" Helen asked.

We were such strangers to my mother's kin, that my brother had scarcely even named them to his wife "It's the Pomfrets," I replied, and then I gave

her the letter.
"Oh, Guy's mug," she said, half smiling, as she stretched out her hand for her. Then she read it quickly, and said, "Well, dear-you'll

I had watched her as she read, and I had marked the flush that spread over her sweet. serious face, as she came to the careless, cold mention of the death of the one who had been

everything to her.
"You will go?" she repeated, as she gave it back to me. "It may be such a good thing for Now I was young, and I sighed for a change from the dull routine of the life I had led for what seemed so long a time. This promised to be such a pleasant change. My ideas of country house Christmas festivities were gained from "Pickwick." I pictured the Towers as a sort of revised and improved "Manor Farm.' Sir Guy already loomed before me—a slightly refined old Wardle; and in the writer of the note f have transcribed I half hopod to find a "maiden aunt," amenatle to the advances of some unknown Tracy Tupman. The prospect was a very seductive one to me; but that cold mention of my brother, tothat cold mention of gether with no mention at all being made of his wife, weighed the balance against going down very heavily. So I shook my head with a creat air of determination, and said, "No, I shouldn't

think of it." Helen rested her elbow on the table, and put her cheek on her hand, and looked at me in-quiringly. I returned her steady gaze, partly because I wanted her to see that I meant what I said, and partly because she was so pleasant to look at.

She was such a pretty woman, this widow of my brother-such a gentle, Madonna-faced woman-with her small, egg-shaped face, her deep blue eyes, and her shining, smooth dark-brown hair. She had a sweet voice, and a sweet smile, too-a smile that crept over her lips, not like a ray of sunlight, but like a pure moonbeam. Yet it was not a cold or unmeaning smile at all; on the contrary, it said more than any other smile I have ever seen. She smiled now when my steady gaze began to relax a little, and the silent lips said so sweetly and well, "You will go?" that I answered the

mute appeal by saying: "Do you really think I had better, Helen?" She nodded, and laughed.

"Yes, really, for several reasons; one is, that you are too young and too pretty to drift about the world by yourself, and when once the Pomtrets see you, they will awake to that fact; for you're like my Guy, Georgie, you get, liked directly."
"Well, that's one reason—a very flattering

way you have worded it, too; but that's not enough; you said there were several; give me "Here is another," she said, giving me her

letter, and getting up from the table as she spoke. "I haven't consulted you, Georgie dear. because it's no use consulting any one about a step that you feel sure you'll have to take what-ever may be said against it." She walked away window as she finished speaking, and stood there looking out, while I read a rather long letter from a lady in Herifornsbire, who, after making out a portentous fist of require-ments, agreed to accept Mrs. Dunbar's services as a resident governess, if she (Helen) could conscientiously declare that she came up to them (the requirements). "Why have you done this?" I asked, hastily

getting up and going over to her. "Because I was obliged to do it, Georgie," she answered, without turning her head; "and I feared that you would be obliged to tollow my example. Poor Guy! how miserable he would have been if he had ever thought that was before his pet sister." She put her hand fondly on my arm then, and I saw there were tears in

"O Nellie! he'd have been ten times more miserable to think it was before you," I said, kissing her; and then she told me more about our circumstances, and I realized that this move of hers, miserable as it was to contemplate, was

also necessary.
"I will set about getting a situation, too, at once," I said firmly.

"No you will not," she reolied; "not fill you return from your visit to the Towers. I am not going to this Mrs. Weston till the holidays are over, so I shall be here to help you when you come back from the Ponfrets; go there you

shall, I'm determined; you ought to know So it was settled that I should go to my relations, and then such an ignominious difficulty arose! I had been in mourning so long that my colored dresses were all hopelessly, unal-terably old-fashioned, and my black was meagre and shabby. Even Helen shook her head over this obstacle. But at last she said—

"You must go, and you must look nice, Georgie; will you agree to leave it all to me, and to ask no questions?" I began protesting, but she stopped me by

'Of course you will; why did I ask you, when you have always been the best girl in the world to me? Before we go any turcher, though, to be sure; but he was like my tather's what is it you most want?"

I modestly mentioned at least a dozen articles. Amongst others a hat, I could not go into the ountry without a hat.

Helen was jotting things down in her note-

"A hat naturally-the travelling dress it all be one of your strong points, Georgie, because of first impressions, you know. Now leave it all to me, and when you come back you shall help to get me ready for Mrs. Weston." I was very much puzzled a few hours after this by seeing Helen get out of a cab at the door, and walt while the servant plunged half of her person into the vehicle several times, emerging after each plunge with a parcet. I knew that Mrs. Guy had a borror of debt. I also knew that Mrs. Guy had very little source money. But I had been told to ask an questions, so I examined the contents of the parcets in grateful and admiring silence.

n grateful and admiring silence. By the 23d my wardrobe was quite ready, rue, it was not extensive, but in my eyes it was very perfect. Helen's taste was too true for one taing to fight with another, whatever the scale. There was nothing to find fault with in the grey travelling dress and jacket braided with black, and the small black hat with a ptarmiblack, and the small black hat with a ptarmi-gan's wing in it, in which I went down to Play-lord. "Mind you make a good impression on them," Mrs. Guy said, when she kissed me at parting; and I colored all over my face in my girlish vanity, and felt that it was not impossible that I might do so. I know I think plenty of chesput hair and grey eyes pretty on other people, and my poor mother used to say that I had the "real Dunbar ngure," which was con-sidered wonderfully willows and good, but notes sidered wonderfully willows and good, but non-of the fair Dunbars - not even dear dus, who was so like me-had my terribly black lishes and eyebrows.

Mrs. Pomiret had told me when the train reached Playford, and I had forgotten to look at a railway bid, and there was no one in the carriage with whom I dared to enter into conversation. My fellow-travellers all looked "good

style," but they did not look "good natured." Stay! I wrong one of them by saying turs. The exception was a fine, fair, distinguished looking young man-one scarcely saw that he was handsome at first-of about eight or nine and-twenty. He had jumped into the carriage immediately after me, and he now sat just opposite to me, with an opossum rag over his knees, and the last number of Punch in his hand. When he had looked through that, he tolded his aims and looked through that, he tolded his aims and looked through the window, and I saw that his profile and expression were both fine and high-bred. "Some young lord of the manor going down to spend his Christmas at his ancestral hairs," I thought, romantically. And I went on to wonder if he would not be rather desolate in those halls if he were not married and a present the solate in those halls if he were not married, and to speculate as to whether he was

a neignbor of Sir Guy Pomitet's or not.

My speculations on the point deepened in in My speculations on the point deepened in interest, when about 4 o'clock we ran into the Playford station, and he got out and looked up and cown the platform. A servant in livery ran up at once, touching his hat, and respectfully smiling a welcome. "Here you are, sir," he said. "Master has sent the stanhope, thinking you'd like to drive the D in at once."

"That's right, Green," my handsome fellowtraveller answered, in one of those strong, sonorous voices that seem to tell of the power within. "Are they all well at home?" he added; and the man replied—

and the man replied-

"Yes, sir; thank you, sir; all well,"
I had been standing looking on and listening
all this time (it was only a minute or two, but it seemed a long time to me, since no one came lorward to make me welcome); but at this point I was recalled to a sense of my position by a porter coming up and a-king"Do you want your bax carried anywhere,

"I think it will be sent for," I stammered out hastily. Then as the gentleman and his servant walked away, I added, "I am going to the Towers—Sir Guy Pomtret's."

"This way, then, miss," the man replied, shouldering my box; and I followed him down

the station out into the yard, where a tiry wagonette and a New Forest pony were drawn up. A groom in stable dress stood by the pony's head, and as I came up he asked if I was Miss Dunbar.

On my replying that I was, he said, "Miss Pomfret had sent her own pony for me, and would I like to drive?" "No, thank you," I answered; "and then I get in, and the groom took the reins and the driving-seat, and we made our way out of the

Out of the quiet station-yard, and into the midst of a brilliantiv animated middle of the broad country road, well kept and amber-hued as that of a park, a stanhope between the shafts of which was a magnificently made dark-brown horse, was pulled up. The driver — my distinguished-looking fellow-traveller—was in the act of taking off his hat to a young lady who was just checking a pair of ponies abreast of him,
A lovely young lady, with a wild blush-rose

complexion, and masses of fair hair billowing out from beneath her small cavaher hat. she sat a little back, drawing up her fine-moutned little steeds, I thought that I had never seen anything so glittering and pretty in life. Her fashing blue eyes, her fare dimpling with smiles, the perfect ease with which she held the reins and restrained the fiery little creatures that were drawing her shell-like phacton, the sheen of the black velvet and the soit grey tone about the grebe in which she was clothed—all made up a pleture that it is impossible to forget, as it was fair to look

Broad as the road was, there was scarcely roum for the wagonette to pass the two other carriages, and the laty I have described did not tarn her eyes in our direction. So we drew up and waited.

"What do you think of grandpapa's last pre senty" the lady was saying as we came out. "! wanted him to wait for you to choose the ponies, but he would not."

"They are handsome enough," the gentleman replied. "You all look very well together, "Behold the charlot of the Fairy Queen," was the quotation that rose to my lips when I first caught sight of you."

"How abs ro you are, Gay!" she replied. ("Guy! What a thoroughly county name Gay must be," I thought.) "How absord you are. Guy; now give me room to pass, and let me get on, or I shall have such a little drive to-day, in consequence of my ill-lack in meeting you," She looked through her long lashes with a balt-childish hall-demure smile. No man could have magined for one instant that she meant seriously that she considered that meeting a piece of ill-luck. But he looked grave at once, and made more room for her to pass, as if there

had not been plenty of room already. She gave her portes a sharp sick, and as they sprang forward she called out-"Good-by-till dinner," and the picture was

I felt so sorry for it -so very sorry that those two handsome young people had vanished before I knew anything about them. As we frove slowly along—for Miss Pomfret's pony was very fat, and by no means fast—I made up little stories, of which the Fatry Queen and the one who had be-stowed the title upon her were the hero and heroine. "We shall meet at dinner," she had said. I saw it all. She was he "lady of the land," and had an entertainment that yield the whell he with ment that night, to which he with the long vellow moustache and blue eyes had come ex pressly from town. I think at this juncture I tooked down distastefully at my plain grey dress trimmed with black braid. The beauty of black velvet and lustrous grebe was very much before me. Ere the feeling became dissatisfaction w reached the Towers, and drove up between tall iron gates through a paved court-yard, bordered with grand old oaks and cedars, to the entrance

door of the Pomirets' family mansion.

I saw at once that it was not a bit like the "Manor Farm" in "Pickwick." What it was like

I shall attempt to tell you.
It was a very wide house of red brick, with that time-honored tint on it that only houses that have centuries full of traditions hanging over them can hope to have. There was a ceer tosse in from of the house, and this was filled in with luxuriantly grown laurels and other evergreens, whose brightly polished leaves broke the straight line of the bottoms of all the lower windows. To the right other large from gates gave access to a broad lawn encircled with higher shrubs. To the left a wide light of steps

offices were in the rear of the house, between it and a hill that was crowned with a couple of ruined towers, the fragments of what had been ruined towers, the fragments of what had been the abode of the family when the Norman king gave the estate to the first Pomíret, the founder of the face. There was an American garden, and a lake, and the loveliest winding, tumbling, tumblent stream meandering through the grounds that was ever seen. But all these things I knew afterwards, All I could see now was that the house was stately looking, but full of bright life apparently; for from every window there streamed a flood of light, and voices full of warm, hearly tones were borne voices full of warm, hearty tones were borne out into the coldness of the December air.

It was all so much more grand than I had expected, that I felt terribly nervous about walking in through that ponderous door, and facing the Pomirets alone. But it had to be done; so I did t without a sign of the hesitation I felt. I know now that the entrance-nall is turnished more like a banqueting-hall, with its buffets and huge tankerds of silver and gold (rather different these to poor Guy's mug)—its big leathern couches and capacious chairs—its grandly pannelled oak walls, hung with shields, and adorned at regular intervals with life-size tigures of men in armor and its floor luxuriously earpeted with Persian rugs and tiger and bear and deer skins. I know all this now-as I know myself, or better, perhaps; but it was all lost upon me then, as I novered somewhere in the rear of the big swiss who acted as porter, who went on announced me to some one, who forthwith came out from a room and made me wel-

This some one was a kindly-looking, small, slightly deformed lady, who came up and kissen me, saying:-

"Good gracious! can you be Georgina's daughter? My dear child, you're as oil as she was when I saw her last." Then she bustled about a little, rang a bell, and finally sent me to my room, under the care of her own maid,

Percival,

Before any of my fears and shortcomings can be accepted by the reader as natural, it must be tully understood that, though I was a town-bred girl, I had seen nothing of "society." I had lived a Bohemian life with my brother till he married, and after his marriage I had lived in absolute quiet with his wife; so now I had not a single precedent to go upon at the Towns—nothing but my moments instinged.

Towers—nothing but my womanly instincts, and I leared that these might prove insufficient. For example, I felt abject before Percival, as she, after having had my box unstrapped by a subordinate, proceeded to unpack it. I knew what it contained, and snew what she would think of what it contained, and wished I hadn't come to the Towers, in a breath. Then I wished she would speak to met and then I remembered that it was not her part to volunteer speech. And then I looked in the cheval glass, and aw my-It reflected at full length, and wished, askingly, that I was not so much more substantial ooking than that brilliant apparition in velvet and grebe who had met the other brilliant apparition at the station.

Presently some tea in a greyish-white cup and some shavings of bread and butter were brought to me—a deep, fat arm-chair having been pre-viously wheeled round to the tire, and a table placed beside it, by Percival. Then that oppressive person announced her intention of leaving me for an hour, till it was time to come back and dress for dinner, and I was left alone.

Alone at last !- and how very small I feit, to be sure, in that lofty room, whose, corners were lost in shade for all the wax candles that were avishly burning themselves away for my enlightenment on the mantelpiece and dressing-table. What a mantelpiece it was, too!—carved into a hundred quaint conceits and flower, fancies, in such rich-looking dark oak. As I sut there, tired, and warm, and excited, I began to make out stories for the many ladies of the aguse of Pomfret who must bave sat where I was sitting now, and warmed themselves in other days,

Those other, days-ah! how the romance of them grew upon and be wildered me as I sat lost in the depths of the arm-chair, looking round at the dressing-table, that was so different to anything I had ever seen before—out of Wardour street. No muslin covered its big carved oak legs—no little delicate fanciful arrangements of quilled ribbon and divided ribbon silled ribbon and fluted lace ran round its order. It stood uncovered in its dark, hard beauty; for I know it to have posse-sed that latter attribute, now that I am aware that Gibbons' imagination and hand both worked upon it. bat a massive silver-framed that stood upon it !- an unbecoming old glass, too, I remember, for all its grandeur-a glass that made me look green when I stood before it and that threw my nose in o a queer line that teature never had from nature.

For I had to rouse myself from my deep, dreamy fancies, and stand to be dressed before that old glass at last. Percival came back, and I gathered my disordered mind together under her auspices, and sat myself down before my stately toilet-altar to be dressed for my first Christmas evening in a country house.

I felt very much depressed when, the slips faid. Percival the terrible, the only maid I had ever had to wast upon me, brought out my prize dress-a fleecy thing. all cloudy white tulle and puffiness, that Heien had taken special pains with. This had been designed as a sort of crowning glory-a thing in which to appear at some great county bail-a obe in which to be seen by the "Prince Charming," who was to be seen and conquered by me during my visit. And now Percival took it out go down to dinner in. I spoke at last suggesting mildly that "there was no company.

"Only the company staying in the house-about twenty," Percival replied, standing before me like a respectable Fate, with the talle dress gathered up over her arm.
"Then I will wear black silk," I contrived to

say, firmly. So at last I got dressed in that with a great white gauge cloud over me called a scarf. And then my hour was come, and I wen down as well as I could to the Pomtrets' drawing

I shall never forget the desire I had to say "Please, don't!" when the before-mentioned gorgeous Swiss threw open the drawing room door, and announced "Miss Dunbar." A shiver ossessed me from head to foot, and something went wrong with a vein in the back of my head and the wails wriggled-and the floor surger and the ceiling came swooping down !-and found myself erect after it all, and shaking hands with an old gentleman, who was thin and grey, and had a very hooked nose.

He was my great uncle, Sir Guy Pom-fret. He did not say much to me, but what he did say was kindly meant and kindly expressed. I found myself sitting down after a minute, looking up at him as he stood before me, questioning me as to my ourney; and then I found myself answering on coherently enough, though a shy glance which I had given to the lest nearly made my brain reel again.

There were several people in the room, but i was large, and they stood in detached groups, and so did not strike the eye at once. At firs, when I came in I was only conscious of light and size. But by the time I had sat down and answered Sir Guy's questions, I was capable of distinguishing forms. The little deformed lad was doing the honors vivaciously I gathered. and then to my left were a couple that I started forward to look more fully at—the Fairy Queen and my handsome fellow-traveller.

What a fairy queen she looked now, to be sure! She absolutely glittered in her fair beauty and her crystalline white silk. She was playing with a big, white-feathered ian, and a bouque Christmas roses, and a scent-bottle, and clove that was balt on and half off, as I looked her. And he stood opp site to her, glancin desiringly at all her coquettish efforts, smiling salt cynically the while-a perfect type of the tawny bearded, blue eyed, well-arown young Englishman, looking, in his severe black and narrow tape-like tie, not a bit like a mute or a waiter (vide the comic writers), but thorough bred as he was-the result of race and good

He was brought up to me soon, and intro-duced by the sprightly, deformed lady (who was, I found, the same Rachsel Pomfret who had written to me) as "your cousin Georgic shall drop the 'Miss Dunbar'-Guy Pom'ret." Then, as I halt rose (not quite knowing wha led away to the gardens. The stables and other | to do, fearing nervously that I should commit

some solecism in manners whatever I did), and returned his bow. Miss Pomiret added:—

"And now come across and get known to snother cousin, my dear;" and before I knew what was happening, I was face to face with the Fairy Queen, who held out a slender, white, I was lace to face with the Fairy Queen, who held out a slender, white, I welled hand to me, and laughed and flashed out smiles, and made me feel very material indeed, as she made herself momentarily more material indeed, as she made herself momentarily more manual had a small had a sm as "Ida Pototret,"

as "Ida Pototret."

I have no very distinct recollection of what went on before dinner or at dinner. I only know I heard my own name repeated several times, and many people came and said kind things to me for my "mother's sake." I gladly, gratefully acknowledged that it was for her sake, solely and wholly, that I was a tayored enest in his grand old place.

But after a time my mind seems to have necepted the situation, and cleared and steaded itself, for all the later events of that evening

itself, for all the later events of that evening are well outlined in my memory. We had not been back in the drawing-room long before Ida came and sat down by me, and shot off some bright little sentences at me.

"So I nearly played the part of Juggernaut's car to you," she began. "Aunt Rachael meant you to be a surprise to us all, and kept your coming a dead secret. I didn't in the leas

The fairy Queen really looked, as she said it, as if it came to her by right divine to drive over such mere mortals as myself. She was lying back in a low chair without any arms to it, and her dress sprang out on either side in great rolling waves of alittering white. Her golden has stood out in strong reliet, like a glory against the dark background of the calvet chair. relief a glory against the dark backage buch a velvet chair. Altogether she tooked such a dainty creature that it seemed a little thing that she should be regardless of the lives of

"You did see me then?" I asked.
"Well, I saw you without seeing you, if you can understand that; I was taken up with showing Guy my new poules; you never saw him before, sid you?" Whom ?"

"Guy-my cousin-your cousin, too, isn't he?

Oh, no, your second cousin, that's it."
"No, I never saw him before,"
"He's my salvation at Christmas," the blonde beauty said, with a little vawa; "he gets up characles. Po you like characles? And we always have a ball or two while he is here."

"Is this his home, or yours?"
"My home now—his in time to come. I live with grandpapa and aunt Rachel; Guy is the heir. She dropped her voice to a whisper as heir. She dropped her voice to a whister as she said this, then she raised it again suddenly, o ask, "Do you like Christmas better in the country than in London ?"
If have never spent a Christmas in the coun-

"There never spent a Christmas in the country yet," I replied,
"Oh, you lucky girl!" she cried; "and I have never spent one out of it; I d give anything—except my ponies—to go to town and see all the burlesques; I don't care for the pantomimes; have you seen many?"
"I told her 'yes;' while Guy was alive I saw all such things, now I 'was sick of them,'" I

added, passionately.
"Who was Guy ?" she asked, scherly; and she seemed very sorry when I told her he was my

But such a bright creature cannot be sorry long for the troubles of others. She was up dancing away towards the piano, in answer to somebody's request that she would sing, before the mist had cleared off my eyes which the mention of Guy had caused. When I could see clearly again, Guy Pomfret, my other cousin, was standing talking to her while she fluttered over some music and seemed weeklet cannot be sorry over some music, and seemed unable to make a

hoice of a song. Presently, however, she found one, or he found it for her. At any rate he placed it, and kept his hand ready to turn the page while she sang, and I got drawn up nearer to them by her voice, and watched his face as he watched hers. She had a ringing, clear, flexible voice. I can xpress what its sound was by naming a color

ore clearly than in any other way-it was a bright blue; it was like a silver bell, as cold and with as much feeling.

She was singing a plaintive, passionate ballad, and she sang it correctly and cleverly; but I felt dissatisfied with the way in which she warbled out those reproachful words:—

You should have told me that before, Jamie. You shou d have told me that before, laddie.' 1 was glad when Guy Pomfret looked dissatisand stopped her before she had finished it quite, by saying, "You never can do that, dignonne-try something else."

She frowned for an instant, and then got up saying, "No, no, some one else, and then I will try to do justice to another of your favorites. Guy; it's not for want of desire to please you that I failed this time, sir," she added, in a low oice, with a little laugh that was slightly tinged with vexation. I did not hear what his answer was, for at

that moment Miss Rachael spoke to me, "Do you sing, my dear?—will you oblige us?" "I shall be very happy," I answered, and then

I felt horribly hot and uncomfortable. My voice was a low, rolling, tremulous contralto— what would it sound like after that silver bell! "Will you like to try some of mine, or will you sing something of your own?" Ida askeds good-naturedly; and then Mr. Pomfret came forward to "see if he could help me to a selection," he said, and I knew that I was fairly committed to it; so I said "I would try what I knew best; and half-staggered by my own temerity, as sang some verses poor Guy and written and

composed once after a visit to the Daubar side "I here's a breath of freedom on the ground Where wild the heather grows. That makes .t dearer to my heart Than I ngland's emblem rose; it springs around the thirtle, the stern flower of the north

It decks the plains of England And the bonners of the Forth "Those purp'e sprigs! no flowers sure. Bleoming in other dells, Are half so sweet to scottish hearts As Scotland's heather-belis, for on mountain-brow, by lowland loch

Through every kind of weather, We roamed about, unchecked, unchid, O'er plains of gorse and heather. "We still can claim a Scottish name And the Scotch blood in us tells, s here on English ground we roam.

Through Scotland's heather-bells For the breath of treedom's on the soil. Where wild the beather grows, a They hold their own most gallantly Against the English rose.

They all thanked me graciously, and said and things, all save Ida. She leaned back till further on the couch she occupied like a brone, and said "such things were beyond ber was impossible for her to make an effort to oe historical, and understand those allusions to the times of Wallace, she supposed." She said his to ber cousin Guy, and I did feel very grateul to him for not seeming to think it witty, and r making her no answer.

I went to bed that night very tired and very uch bewildered, and very much interested in nem alt. It was so funny that they should be y own people, and still so far from me in all al interest and sympathy. Even while I was cusing them of this in my heart, I was made eel myself an ingrate by Miss Pomfret ming in to bid me good-night again.

The kind, sprightly old lady stirred the fire to brighter bluze, and sat herself down in the m-chair opposite to it I have come to tell you a little about the

ate of affairs here, my dear," she began, riskly. "I must have you know all about us and care all about us. In the first place, you ust know that it's a cherished plan of my her's to see Guy and Ida married to each Is it?" I replied.

"Yes: both my brothers are dead. Ids is the only child of my second brother, Arthur, and Arthur was his father's favorite; in the same way Ida is his favorite grandould; she has arways lived here; he wants her to be mistress of the Towers, and as she can't be unless she marries Guy, why he wants her to marry Guy,

"And how do they both like the plan?" I asked, beginning to be intensely interested in the ron ance which had commenced (for me) st or tride the railway station.

'Ida likes it weil enough, but Guy is inscruta-

e. The fact is, my dear, I'm not so fond or y niece as I am of my nephew."
"What a beauty she is !" I exclaimed.
"Yes, she is; and she has never thought of ov cared for any one besides her beauty from the moment she knew its power. Guy's a great deal too good for her; but that is not what feame in to say. Have you brought your hant.

I haven't one." I confessed, with blushes. "Can you ride ?" used to ride a good deal with Guy in a rough sort of way, when we were out for our autumn trips."

"Ab, weil! we'll see about a habit for your

"Ab, well! we'll see about a habit for your meantime you must wear an old skirt. Ida has planued a ride for lo-morrow, meaning to take Guy out by herself. Now I mean you to go too, my dear." Then the old lady patted me on the cheek, and left me.

Wishing to think well of what was so lovely, I tried hard not to see on the following day that Ida either grudged me the pleasure Miss Pomfret had procured for me, or that she dishked my society. She opened her great starry blue eyes when I came down in the skirt and a balf-tight, sealskin jacket, and strugged her own well-babited shoulders when we walked out to meonit our horses, and she saw that a very handsome brown gelding had been prepared for me. Then she turned away, and Guy Pomfret put her up on her own beautiful mare. Guiput her up on her own beautiful mare, Gui-nevre, and when she was mounted, she (Ida) realized Tennyson's description of that poorless queen very well. I thought

"She looked so lovely as she swayed the rein with dainty finger ups; A man had given all other bliss. And all his worldly hopes for this, To waste his who e heart in one kiss. Upon her perfect his."

Then my turn came, and I was horribly alrast lest I might fail to rise like a bird to the saddle as Ida had done, and was proportionately gratetal to Mr. Pomiret and Fate when I tound myself securely seated without having blundered at all. Puck is a charming horse, Miss Dunbar, but he likes to have his own way on the turi," Mr. Pomfiet said, as he settled me. Then he added good-naturedly, almost in a whisper, "Dou't let him get his head—ride him on the curb."

"Thanks. I'll attend to your direction," I replied; and then Mr. Pomfret mounted his own powerful hunter, and we started. Though it was mid-winter—Christmas even in fact—there was no crispoess in the air and no frost on the ground. The roads were muddy and heavy, and the atmosphere mild and humid. We rede slowly for three or four miles along the highway, and then ids proposed that we should go on some downs that bordered the road, and

"have a sharp canter in a sharp air."
"Remember," h.r. Guy Pomiret muttered, as we took the turf, and I nodded assent, and drew my curb-rein a trifle tighter.
Puck went along over the billowing downs in

a grand charging canter for about a couple of hundred yards. Then Ida Pomfret's mare flashed past us, the rider sitting erect and fair, her horse evidently well in hand, though it was going at racing speed. As she bounded ahea!, Puck did something extraordinary with all his legs at once (Guy told me afterwards that he "bucked"), threw up his head, then lowered it suddenly with a jerk, and then went off in the

suddenly with a jerk, and then went off in the wake of the mare at a pace that stretched him out flat nearly, and made my brain whirl.

I do not think that I was terrified, though I was well aware that I had no more control over Puck than I had over destiny. I was dimly conscious of Ida branching off to the right, while I was borne straight on towards what looked like a wall of blue sky. Another moment, and I knew that I was nearing the brow of a steep hill. Another and other hoofs than Puck's sound in my ears close behind hoofs than Puck's sound in my ears close behind me—then something rose with a crashing noise, and crushed against me-a sharp pain smote through my chest—a roar sounded in my ears— horses seemed to be about and around me on

every side, and it was all darkness.

When it came light again—that is, when I opened my cyes—I found myself lying on a green mound half way down the slope of a steep hill, with my head resting on Guy Pomfret's arm, and Puck standing close by, looking brightly unconscious of having done anything wrong. "What did I do?" I asked, and Guy replied, "Came an away are standard or 'Came an awful cropper with Puck in gatloping down a slope; but you're not hurt—tell me?-

I roused myself then, and found that my foot was in pain and turned the wrong way—my i was sprained, in fact, But how about Puck? I was much more anxious about the handsome, brilliant-looking little brown borse than about my-

'Puck is all right," Mr. Pomfret said. "And where is she?" 'Ida ?"

'Here she comes," he replied gravely, as Mis-Ida made her appearance round a knoll, "I sent her to find a boy to come and take Puck

Miss Ida Pomfret came up and leaned forward gracefully on her pommel, still sitting well back in the saddle, to speak to me. "I hope you're not hurt; but I never saw such rash riding in my life, Miss Dunbar," 'Nor did I; but it was not Miss Dunbar's,"

Mr. Pomiret replied; and I said:—
"I really think it was you started Pack." I said it most innocently, and saw with surprise that she colored like fire. "I suppose you will have nerve enough to ride home, if this boy leads Puck ?" she asked;

and I said:-"Ob, yes;" but Mr. Pom'ret shook his head.
"Miss Dunbar has sprained her ankle, Ida." "Then how is she to get home?" Ida asked, if you won't let her ride; she can't walk."

You will see how she is to get home," he answered, picking me up in his arms, as ne spoke. Then he mounted his own horse, holding e easily the while; and I submitted passively through sheer amazement. "Really, Guy !" Miss Ida exclaimed, indig-nantly, "do you think I am going to make one of such a procession!"

"That you'll please yourself about," he re-plied, coolist then he told the boy to lead Puck home execulty, and started up the hill at a slow pace I was half faint with the pain, and presently

be saw that I was, I suppose, for he said:—
"The sooner I get you home the better for your ankle, Miss Dunbar. This old fellow's gallop is like a rocking-chair; tell me if you can He slackened the reins, and the horse went of like an arrow at once.
"Yes, I can bear this," I murmured, as he

grasped me more firmly, and Guy Pomfret "That's right; that's plucky;" and then sang: -"Grant hebschen auch? Der mond scheinehelt. Hurrah! die Iodi-n reiten schnelt Grant liebschen auch vor Fodten?"

"Say more of 'Leonora,' I roused myself to utter, as he paused; but he merely repeated the lead me the whole of the marvellous ballad

it at same afternoon.

I heard Mr. Pomfret tell his aunt when we reached home that "Ida had started off in the way that she knew Puck would never stand. and that Miss Dunbar managed him cleverly till be went down with her." And I saw Miss Rachael and her nephew exchange queer little ympathetic glances; but I did not know what bey meant.

I think that I was almost glad that my ankle was sprained. It was well worth enduring the pain I didendure, to be made so much the two people I liked best at the Tower by came and looked at me as I was stre ut on a couch in Miss Rachael's boudoir (ould not have me imprisoned in my bedroo he said); looked at me through his eyeglass, and remarked "it was a pity; but still fortunate hat I was not disfigured at all." But Miss omiret and her nephew stayed with me, and d all they could to amuse me; she making the well-meaning readjustments of the pillows brief intervals:—he reading me "Leonora," and attering well-adjusted phrases relative to the orm, that made me half afraid to mention it.

ida was not agreeable when she came home. e accident was, in some nameless way, hale further me in the family, if I may use such expression. She had "enjoyed her ride in ensely," she said, before she was pusit sust-Liss Pomrret laughed and shook has head, concerning it, "enjoyed her ride numensels, as